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ABSTRACT

With much to offer rural girls as well as much to learn from them, Girl Scouting is trying to reach more girls and adults in rural areas. The challenges include economic setbacks for farming, unemployment, isolated populations, and changing rural culture. Along with the challenges are the many resources of rural areas and the congruence between Girl Scout beliefs and principles and the outlooks of persons in rural areas. To expand rural Girl Scouting it has been helpful to recruit and train indigenous leadership and to establish support systems to meet local needs. The variety of innovative Girl Scout models for rural areas has included establishment of consolidated schools committees, community troop committees, hot line leaders, neighborhood learning centers, and library resource centers. Alternative models focus on meeting patterns, including designs for Girl Scout range/farm troops and Girl Scout troops where the program is delivered through the mail. Programs for rural areas include those focused on health and safety, the out-of-doors, and opportunities for the rural girl within and beyond her local area. Girl Scouting is committed to addressing the needs of rural girls and to collaboration with related groups such as the Rural Education Association. (JHZ)

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GIRL SCOUTS

GIRL SCOUTS: A STRONG ALLY FOR RURAL EDUCATION

by

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Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

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TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP OF GIRL SCOUTING TO RURAL EDUCATION, ONE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT GIRL SCOUTING IN THE UNITED STATES IS, WHAT IT DOES, AND HOW IT IS ORGANIZED. ESSENTIALLY WE ARE A MOVEMENT "...OPEN TO ALL GIRLS AND ADULTS WHO ACCEPT THE GIRL SCOUT PROMISE AND LAW": AND WHO, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PREAMBLE TO OUR CONSTITUTION, "DO DEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE PURPOSE OF INSPIRING GIRLS WITH THE HIGHEST IDEALS OF CHARACTER, CONDUCT, PATRIOTISM AND SERVICE THAT THEY MAY BECOME HAPPY AND RESOURCEFUL CITIZENS".

WE ARE AFFILIATED WITH GIRL GUIDE AND GIRL SCOUT MOVEMENTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES THROUGH THE "WORLD ASSOCIATION OF GIRL GUIDES AND GIRL SCOUTS", REPRESENTING 108 COUNTRIES AND MORE THAN EIGHT MILLION GIRL AND ADULT MEMBERS. OUR CURRENT U.S. MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS OF APPROXIMATELY THREE MILLION GIRLS AND ADULTS. WE ARE THE LARGEST VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN IN THE FREE WORLD TODAY.

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OURS IS AN INFORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM CARRIED OUT IN SMALL GROUPS WITH ADULT LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPED AROUND THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF GIRLS. THE PROGRAM EMPHASES ARE DESIGNED TO HELP EACH GIRL DEVELOP SELF POTENTIAL:

- DEEPEN HER AWARENESS OF SELF AS A UNIQUE PERSON OF WORTH;
- DEVELOP VALUES TO GIVE MEANING AND DIRECTION TO HER LIFE;
- RELATE TO OTHERS WITH INCREASING SKILL, MATURITY, AND SATISFACTION;
- CONTRIBUTE TO HER SOCIETY THROUGH HER OWN TALENTS AND IN COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH OTHERS.

THERE IS ONE GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM THAT IS ADAPTED TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF GIRLS AT FIVE AGE LEVELS.

Daisy Girl Scout	age 5-6 OR grade K-1
Brownie Girl Scout	age 6-7-8 OR grade 1-2-3
Junior Girl Scout	age 8-9-10-11 OR grade 3-4-5-6
Cadette Girl Scout	age 11-12-13-14 OR grade 6-7-8-9
Senior Girl Scout	age 14-15-16-17 OR grade 9-10-11-12

AS MEMBERS OF CAMPUS GIRL SCOUTS, COLLEGE STUDENTS SERVE THE COMMUNITY THROUGH LOCAL GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS. GIRLS FROM THE UNITED STATES WHO ARE LIVING ABROAD TEMPORARILY (WHERE THERE ARE NO GUIDES IN THE HOSTESS COUNTRY OR WHERE THE GUIDE ASSOCIATION AGREES THAT U.S. GIRL SCOUT TROOPS MAY BE ORGANIZED) CONTINUE THEIR GIRL SCOUTING AS U.S.A. GIRL SCOUTS OVERSEAS. OVER 29,000 GIRLS AND ADULTS ARE ACTIVE IN APPROXIMATELY 60 COUNTRIES. MOST ARE FROM FAMILIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE U.S. MILITARY OVERSEAS OR WITH MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS. ADDITIONAL GIRLS FROM THE U.S. LIVING ABROAD BELONG TO TROOPS OF THE HOSTESS COUNTRY.

THREE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS AND 166,000 TROOOPS WITHIN THESE COUNCILS ARE DISTRIBUTED ACROSS SIX REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES (AND AREAS WHERE THERE ARE U.S.A. GIRL SCOUTS OVERSEAS). A REGIONAL CHAIRMAN, RESPONSIBLE TO THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND ELECTED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, SERVES AS A LINK BETWEEN THE NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE COUNCILS IN EACH REGION.

STAFF IN THREE FIELD CENTERS (NEW YORK, CHICAGO, AND DALLAS) PROVIDE SERVICES TO COUNCILS BY SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP RATHER THAN REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION. MEETINGS OF OUR NATIONAL COUNCIL ARE HELD EVERY THREE YEARS AND THE AFFAIRS OF THE CORPORATION ARE MANAGED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CONSISTING OF 51 MEMBERS, WHO MEET BETWEEN SESSIONS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL.

WHATEVER THEIR LOCATION, SIZE, OR COMPOSITION, LOCAL COUNCILS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS IN GENERAL AND THE SCHOOLS IN PARTICULAR. COOPERATIVE APPROACHES HAVE PROVEN SUCCESSFUL AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS EFFORT TO ADDRESS CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND REMAIN A VALUES-CENTERED ORGANIZATION REACHING AND MEETING THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF TODAYS GIRLS. I WILL BE REFERRING TO THESE LINKAGES LATER.

WHAT, THEN, DOES GIRL SCOUTING OFFER GIRLS? CERTAINLY THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP AND TO USE LEADERSHIP SKILLS; TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT ARE PART OF A PROGRAM FOCUSED ON:

- THE GIRL AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND AS PART OF A GROUP
- A CODE OF VALUES, EXPRESSED IN THE PROMISE AND LAW
- COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- THE FUTURE AND A CHANGING WORLD
- COMMITMENT AND SERVICE
- OPPORTUNITY FOR NON-STEREOTYPED CAREER EXPLORATION, EDUCATION, AND INTERNSHIPS
- THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE PLURALISM IN ACTION AS PART OF A MULTIRACIAL, MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZATION WHOSE MEMBERS EXPLORE THEIR WORLD -- AT HOME AND ABROAD

AND WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF GSUSA IN RURAL AMERICA? WE HAVE DONE OUR HOMEWORK. WE KNOW THAT THE 1980 CENSUS LISTS A RURAL POPULATION NUMBERING 59,500,000 AND THAT 7 MILLION LIVE IN PLACES THAT HAVE BETWEEN 1,000 AND 2,500 INHABITANTS. THIRTY-ONE PERCENT OF THE RURAL POPULATION IS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE AND THE STATUS OF RURAL STATES IS SHIFTING -- FROM PREDOMINATLY OUT-MIGRATING TO IN-MIGRATING.

WE KNOW, TOO, THAT FOR MANY, THAT TRADITIONAL FAMILY FARM IS BECOMING EXTINCT AND, IN MANY CASES, WOMEN ON FARMS HAVE HAD TO LEAVE TO BECOME FULL-TIME WAGE EARNERS. IN 17 OF OUR STATES LESS THAN 50% OF THE RESIDENTS ARE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS. THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE ARE IN RURAL AND SUBURBAN AREAS. OF THOSE 17 STATES -- THAT IS, MAINE, VERMONT, MASSACHUSETTS, DELAWARE, WEST VIRGINIA, KENTUCKY, MISSISSIPPI, ARKANSAS, IOWA, NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA, NEBRASKA, KANSAS, MONTANA, WYOMING, IDAHO AND NEW MEXICO -- SIX ARE IN GIRL SCOUT REGION V.

AS CHAIRMAN OF REGION V, COMPOSED OF A TOTAL OF 10 STATES, I AM WELL AWARE OF THE CHALLENGES AND THE JOYS THAT COUNCILS IN THESE SIX STATES CONFRONT DAILY. THESE STATE GIRL SCOUT MEMBERSHIP PROFILES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

KANSAS	-	35,631
IOWA	-	35,045
ARKANSAS	-	25,394
NEBRASKA	-	25,364
NEW MEXICO	-	15,450
WYOMING	-	7,332

WE ARE REACHING GIRLS AND ADULTS BUT WE SHOULD BE REACHING MORE AND WE ARE TRYING. THE CHALLENGES ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY. PERHAPS THE SET BACKS FOR FARMING. UNEMPLOYMENT, LABOR STRIKES, THE CLOSING OF FACTORIES AND MINES, AND TIGHTENED FAMILY BUDGETS HAVE TOUCHED ALL OF US ACROSS THE UNITED STATES BUT THE LIST OF CHALLENGES FOR GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS IS LONG. I THINK YOU WILL RECOGNIZE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS PRESENTED BY:

- SPARSE, ISOLATED POPULATIONS
- GREAT TRAVEL DISTANCES
- FEW CORE CENTERS, OR NONE AT ALL
- NO PUBLIC TRANSPORATION
- CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS
- WORKING WOMEN
- A DEARTH OF POTENTIAL SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS
- UNSTABLE ECONOMY AND GRAVE POVERTY IN SOME AREAS
- HIGH MIGRANT POPULATIONS
- CHANGING RURAL CULTURE
- NEW IMMIGRANTS MOVING IN

BUT THESE CHALLENGES HAVE NOT BEEN CITED WITHOUT ATTENTION TO THE "JOYS" AND OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT IN MANY OF THE AFFECTED AREAS WHICH ARE OUR CONCERN. RESOURCES IN RURAL AREAS MUST NOT BE OVERLOOKED: PEOPLE, SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES, CHURCHES, AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, TELEVISION, RADIO, YES -- AND THE U.S. MAIL. LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THE WORK PEOPLE DO MUST BE INCLUDED AS A PRIME RESOURCES. WE HAVE FOUND THE ATTITUDES AND GOALS OF RURAL WOMEN PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RURAL EDUCATION; THEY ARE INTERESTED IN PROGRAMS IN THE ARTS AND THE HUMANTIES; AND THEY ARE "GOOD NEIGHBORS" ACCUSTOMED TO HELPING OTHERS. THERE IS INDEED CONGRUENCE BETWEEN GIRL SCOUT BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES, THE INFORMAL EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF OUR PROGRAM AND THE OUTLOOKS OF PERSONS IN RURAL AREAS. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE GIRL SCOUTING CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF THE RURAL GIRL, WE HAVE RESPONDED TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND TO THE CHALLENGES.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE? WE HAVE FOUND IT HELPFUL TO RECRUIT AND TO TRAIN INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP AND TO ESTABLISH SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO MEET LOCAL AREA NEEDS. OUR TRAINING PROGRAM, FOCUSED NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY, IS DESIGNED TO PREPARE VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYED STAFF FOR THEIR JOBS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION. NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS, MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL VOLUNTEER TRAINING CORPS, AND NATIONAL EMPLOYED STAFF CARRY OUT TRAINING AT EDITH MACY CONFERENCE CENTER AND AT SITES DESIGNATED BY OUR THREE NATIONAL FIELD CENTERS.

THE EDITH MACY CONFERENCE CENTER IS OUR LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTER IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK NEAR CHAPPAQUA. LOCAL COUNCIL TRAINING IS DIRECTED TOWARD THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF THE COUNCIL AND MAY INCLUDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN THESE AREAS: WORKING WITH GIRLS OF THE VARIOUS AGE LEVELS, HEALTH AND SEXUALITY, CONTEMPORARY ISSUES SUCH AS DRUG ABUSE OR THE TRAINING OF TRAINERS. THE VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYED STAFF WHO CARRY OUT THE TRAINING FUNCTIONS DESCRIBED ARE OFTEN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE GIRL SCOUT MODELS FOR SERVING GIRLS IN RURAL AREAS HAS PROVIDED AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE BASE FOR OUR COUNCILS TO USE. MODELS FOCUS ON A VARIETY OF APPROACHES; THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS COMMITTEES, COMMUNITY TROOP COMMITTEES, HOT LINE LEADERS, NEIGHBORHOOD LEARNING CENTERS AND LIBRARY RESOURCE CENTERS.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOCUS ON MEETING PATTERNS, INCLUDING DESIGNS FOR GIRL SCOUT TV TROOPS, GIRL SCOUT IN-SCHOOL TROOPS THAT MEET DURING ACTIVITY PERIODS, GIRL SCOUT RANGE/FARM TROOPS AND ZIP GIRL SCOUT TROOPS WHERE PROGRAM IS DELIVERED THROUGH THE MAIL. IN ALL CASES, THE AIM IS TO SEE THAT TROOPS ARE ORGANIZED, REGISTERED, AND MAINTAINED IN RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITIES. YOU MIGHT FIND IT INTERESTING TO READ THE ARTICLE "LIVING BIG IN SMALL TOWNS", WHICH IS IN THE FALL 1985 ISSUE OF THE GIRL SCOUT LEADER. IN THIS ARTICLE COUNCILS DESCRIBE SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PROBLEMS IN SITES AS DIVERSE AS KEARNEY, NEBRASKA AND KA'U, HAWAII.

A REVIEW OF GSUSA RESOURCES FOR USE IN RURAL AREAS WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THOSE FOCUSED ON HEALTH AND SAFETY, THE OUT-OF-DOORS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RURAL GIRL WITHIN AND BEYOND HER LOCAL AREA, FOR EXAMPLE:

1. "ADAPTING GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM FOR GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES", "SAFE & SOUND AT HOME ALONE" AND "PROJECT SAFE TIME" ARE READILY AVAILABLE.
2. "TUNE INTO WELL-BEING: SAY NO TO DRUGS".
3. "OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN GIRL SCOUTING" IS OUR LATEST GUIDE FOR CHILDREN'S CAMPING AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION.
4. OUR CAMP OF TOMORROW IS EXPECTED TO OPEN IN 1987 AT THE EDITH MACY CONFERENCE CENTER. THE CAMP WILL BE A LABORATORY FOR TESTING AND DEMONSTRATING HOW PEOPLE CAN LIVE TOGETHER COMFORTABLY AND SAFELY WHILE PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT. DESIGNED WITH THE TRADITIONAL GIRL SCOUT COMMITMENT TO USE RESOURCES WISELY IN MIND, THIS EXCITING CENTER WILL REFLECT OUR CONCERN NOT ONLY FOR THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT BUT THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AS WELL WITH EASY ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE.
5. AT OUR NATIONAL CENTER WEST, IN TEN SLEEP, WYOMING (NEAR WORLAND), HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CREDIT IS GRANTED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OFFERED AT THE SITE.
6. COUNCILS WILL BE RESPONDING TO THE REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROJECT HOMETOWN AMERICA WHICH IS EXPECTED TO RAISE THREE MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE FUNDING OF GRASSROOTS PROJECTS DESIGNED TO SOLVE LOCAL PROBLEMS. THE PROJECT IS SPONSORED BY AMERICAN EXPRESS.

7. COUNCIL SPONSORED, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ARE ANNOUNCED ANNUALLY IN "RUNWAYS TO GIRL SCOUT WIDER OPPORTUNITIES".
8. DURING NOVEMBER, THE CONFERENCE, "PRIDE, PREJUDICE AND PLURALISM" WILL BE SPONSORED BY THE GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL OF THE PACIFIC IN HONOLULU, HAWAII. A CONFERENCE WITH NATIONWIDE PARTICIPATION, PARTICIPANTS WILL EXAMINE ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS TO PLURALISM, ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR ELIMINATING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM.

THE GIRL SCOUT COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY AND INCREASING PLURALISM WITHIN OUR MOVEMENT IS EVIDENCED IN ONE OF OUR CORPORATE GOALS FOR 1985-1990. IT IS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH PRESENTATION OF DIVERSE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION, INCLUDING POLICY MAKING POSITIONS.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF RURAL GIRLS AND TO COLLABORATION WITH RELATED GROUPS. AMONG OTHERS, THOSE GROUPS INCLUDE THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS (PTA), THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NAESP), THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION (NSBA), AND YOUR OWN RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (REA). OUR WORK TOGETHER TAKES MANY FORMS, VARYING FROM LOCAL SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITY PERIODS AND PROVISION OF MEETING SITES FOR GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OR YOUR SERVICES AS VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS.

OFTEN SOME OF YOU SPEAK IN SUPPORT OF OUR EFFORTS. DURING MAY, WHEN GIRL SCOUTS OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL VISITED THE OFFICES OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION, THOMAS A. SHANNON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAID, "IN PRACTICE AND PHILOSOPHY, GIRL SCOUT PROGRAMS ARE AN IMPORTANT ADJUNCT TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THEY ADD A DIMENSION NOT AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SCHOOLS ALONE IN RAISING YOUNG GIRLS TO RESPONSIBLE ADULTHOOD. THE GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM IS A TRUE PARTNER OF THE SCHOOL IN THE COMPLETE EDUCATION OF YOUNG WOMEN." THAT MADE US GLOW!

OFTEN, YOU ASK US TO SHARE INFORMATION -- AS YOU DID FOR THE RURAL EDUCATION NEWS EARLIER THIS SUMMER -- AND EVA SCOTT'S ARTICLE WAS THE RESULT. IT IS TITLED "GIRL SCOUTS ACTIVE IN RURAL AREAS."

READING THROUGH YOUR MATERIALS PRIOR TO THIS VISIT, I NOTED YOU HAVE ONE EXPANDED GOAL FOCUSED ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS. THERE ARE NINE WAYS YOU PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THIS GOAL. I HOPE WE HAVE HELPED YOU TODAY WITH AT LEAST THREE OF YOUR OBJECTIVES.

BORN IN COLORADO, RAISED IN KANSAS, AND THE DAUGHTER OF A MAN WHOSE EARLY YEARS WERE SPENT ON A FARM IN THE HEARTLAND OF THIS COUNTRY, I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DID NOT SAY THAT I BELIEVE GIRL SCOUTING NOT ONLY HAS SOMETHING FOR RURAL GIRLS BUT RURAL GIRLS HAVE SOMETHING FOR GIRL SCOUTING.

WHETHER FROM A FARM, A RESERVATION, A SMALL TOWN OR A REMOTELY ISOLATED AREA, THESE GIRLS OFTEN BRING GIFTS OF TENACITY, FAITH, AND PERSERVERANCE DISCOVERED DURING ENCOUNTERS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL. THEY MAY BRING THE CHARACTER STRENGTHENING SKILLS OF INDEPENDENCE, CONFIDENCE, RESOURCESFULNESS AND FLEXIBILITY THAT ARE DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MANY ADULT EXAMPLES AROUND THEM. SURELY THEY WILL BRING A UNIQUE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNIVERSE WHICH IS WORTHY OF SHARING WITH OTHERS. I BELIEVE WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM THEM. AND THE GIRL SCOUTS DO TOO!